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Man Without Country

Ex-CIA agent Agee is at home with his cause

By Rogers Worthington

SOMEWHERE IN A State Department drawer, or filing cabinet, or safe, lies the United States passport of Philip Burnett Franklin Agee, age 46, lately of Hamburg, West Germany. It is a small document, one of the few Agee had that identified him as a citizen of the United States, a nation whose shores he hasn't touched in 10 years. And Philip Agee, a man who a number of intelligence officers would dearly like to drop out of an airplane over a large ocean, may never see his passport again.

Of all the ex-CIA officers who quit and blew the whistle, Agee has been the agency's most despised apostate and nemesis. His 1975 book, "Inside the Company: CIA Diary," went farther than any of the others. He named names — 25 pages worth — and blew the covers of so many agency fronts in Latin America that the CIA was forced to revamp much of its operation there. He lent his name and labors to other naming efforts as well, principally the Washington-based Covert Action Information Bulletin, and two books its staff produced, titled, "Dirty Work 1: The CIA in Western Europe," and "Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa."

But it was after remarks he made during the early days of the hostage crisis in Iran that his passport was confiscated. Agee had suggested that records of CIA operations in Iran be exchanged for the U.S. hostages. The State Department recalled his passport, ostensibly because they feared Agee might show up at an Iranian "spy" tribunal. Although lower courts have ruled the confiscation illegal, the decision is now in the hands of the

may support the State Department.

TRAVEL ENHANCES Agee's effectiveness as a CIA foe, and he does not relish losing his passport. But he says he attaches no special sentiment to it.

"If I don't get it back, there are other ways. I don't think I'll forever be unable to travel." But the other ways are unsure. Last year the Grenadan government sent him a passport (as an alien) so he could attend the first anniversary of their socialist revolution. Agee declined to go when he learned the West German would not give him a resident stamp in that passport.

Not only is his passport in limbo, but so, to an extent, is his career as CIA critic. He has been enjoined from writing or publicly speaking about the CIA without first submitting his text to the agency for clearance. And if Congress passes an Intelligence Identities Protection bill this spring, Agee and the tiny staff of the Covert Action Information Bulletin will be open to criminal prosecution if they name any more names (something Agee says he no longer does).

This means more problems for Agee, who has had plenty of them since quitting the CIA in 1969. Still, despite his current problems, this past year of exile in Hamburg was one of the more settled ones he has known.

"For the first time in a long time, he has been able to unpack his suitcase," said Louis Wolf, a friend, and editor of the Covert Action Information Bulletin.

AGEE HAD HOPED England would be his home. He moved there in 1972 after an odyssey that took him from Mexico to Havana to Paris. Mexico was his last duty station with the CIA and where he chose to live after resigning. But he found too many obstacles to the obsession growing within him: the writing of "Inside the Company." Never did he suspect, he says in looking back, that the consequences of his actions would lead to years of surveillance, being kicked out

Seixas, a young Brazilian revolutionary he met in Paris.

THROUGHOUT THOSE years, Agee's political trajectory continued to hurtle toward the left. It began in the CIA with rejection of gradualist reform as the road to an improved society. From there he came to see the CIA as an intensifier of prevailing injustices and resolved to "put my humanity before my nationality . . . and work to impair the CIA's ability to support political repression, torture, and anachronistic social and economic systems." And from there, in his own words in a 1975 Esquire magazine article, he came to "aspire to be a Communist and a revolutionary."

When Agee speaks, it is with a scholarly formality 10 steps removed from any kind of gut reaction. His public comments and his attacks on the CIA often are marked by a straight-backed rectitude, a sense of moral correctness that follows naturally from his rigorous education at Jesuit secondary schools and Notre Dame, and his cadre-like CIA training at Camp Peary, Va. He knows his position is correct, and questions of balance of power, geo-political spheres of influence, and national loyalty be damned. No matter who holds his passport, he sees himself first as a citizen of the world.

IT WAS BARELY a year after the book was published in 1975 when the British government moved to deport Agee for national security reasons. They accused him of being in contact with foreign intelligence officers, a charge he denies.

"I work for myself," he said. "I do have my contacts with people all over the world. But I never talk to the Soviets, and I practically never talk to the Cubans, either."

Despite a long legal battle — and a

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